

RELEASED IN FULL

WHA Press Guidance
April 11, 2002

VENEZUELA: WILL CHAVEZ BE OUSTED?

Q: Do you have any comment on an op-ed piece in today's *Washington Times* that asserted that State Department officials believe his own people will oust Venezuelan President Chávez?

A: AS STATED HERE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, THE UNITED STATES IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN VENEZUELA. FURTHERMORE, THE CONTINUED POLITICAL POLARIZATION RAISES SERIOUS CONCERNS FOR DEMOCRATIC STABILITY. THE UNITED STATES IS ENGAGED FULLY WITH ALL PARTIES IN VENEZUELA AND OUR PARTNERS IN THE HEMISPHERE TO ENCOURAGE A PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC, AND CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION TO VENEZUELA'S CRISIS.

THE UNITED STATES:

- (1) URGES ALL PARTIES TO MODERATE THEIR RHETORIC,
ENGAGE IN GENUINE DIALOGUE, RESPECT POLITICAL
RIGHTS, AND AVOID VIOLENCE,**
- (2) STRESSES THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF VENEZUELA HAS A
SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ESTABLISH THE CONDITIONS
NECESSARY TO FOSTER GENUINE DIALOGUE,**
- (3) CALLS ON THE OPPOSITION TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY, AND**
- (4) REJECTS ANY UNCONSTITUTIONAL, UNDEMOCRATIC
EFFORT BY ANY PARTY.**

THE UNITED STATES, IN KEEPING WITH THE INTER-AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CHARTER, JOINS THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) IN ACKNOWLEDGING THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRACY TO THIS HEMISPHERE AND IN REJECTING ANY UNCONSTITUTIONAL INTERRUPTION OR ALTERATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC ORDER. DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS MUST BE RESPECTED.